

the MORRIS RING  
FOUNDED 1934

# THE Circular

Edited for the Morris Ring by Eddie Dunmore  
118 Edgecombe, South Croydon, Surrey CR2 8AD

Number 36



**The Medal Presentation: Bridgwater 2000:**

Photo: ED





# The Squire

**A**s the new Squire, I am beginning to 'get to grips' with all the various responsibilities of the job. Somewhat naively, perhaps, I imagined most of the time would involve just the dancing and being a figure-head. Now I know better. There is a tremendous amount going on in the background involving secretarial/committee/organisational work and I am delighted and fortunate to have John Frearson as Bagman and Steve Adamson as Treasurer to help deal with these matters and to give me support.

Over the weekend, September 23-24, I joined the Rutland MM for their Day of Dance and Feast. The organisation was excellent and there were unlimited opportunities for dancing and access to high quality ales. It was good to see the genuine goodwill between the local people and their 'home' Morris dancing Side; always a recipe for success. An enjoyable evening at the Jockey MM Feast (September 30th) following their Day of Dance around central Birmingham, and then I shall be going to the Field town Instructional (October 6-8th) hosted by the Dartington MM with Bert Cleaver leading the dancing.

Out of curiosity, really, I have been looking through 'The First Log Book' of the Morris Ring (March 1991): a succinct record of the early days and recommended reading to idle away an hour or two. How straightforward it all was and how some things seem to alter but little e.g., Thaxted Meeting, 1935 'after the dancing, at 8pm, a hungry mob of men gathered again in the Hall, where the feast had been pre-

*pared, and in a short time hunger was appeased and thirst at least partially satisfied'. No change there. But times do change and, as the next century beckons, I am aware of the Darwinian conclusion – and inherent threat – that only those who respond to change will survive. With this in mind, let me identify and comment briefly on the areas that I want to focus on during my term of office.*

**Dancing:** whatever we do, in terms of performing the Morris to the public, must be done positively and with style. Always aim at a high standard of technique and presentation. Looking ahead there are some interesting Ring Meetings arranged for 2001 to include Thaxted, Boar's Head and Claro, Greensleeves and East Surrey. For each of the latter two, not only will it be a 'special occasion' for their 75th anniversary but also the fact that both were included in the original six clubs that met at Thaxted in 1934 to inaugurate the Morris Ring.

**Domesday 2000:** To carry out a census. I would like each Side to provide a colour photograph together with a complete list of all the members and their activities within the club. **All Bagmen;** Action please.

**Ring Membership:** To encourage Associate clubs to progress to Full Membership.

**Area Reps:** To clarify their role as the 'ears and eyes' for the Squire. I want to encourage more activities and joint ventures between sides in an Area as orchestrated by the Reps.

**Promotion:** This is a key area for future action. The Mor-

ris Ring together with the Morris Federation and the Open Morris are actively involved in presenting the Morris to the general public. The Ring has its own singular and distinctive approach and as Squire I shall strive to maintain and safeguard this status. However, and together with EFDSS, we have joint meetings to exchange views and help build up sound relationships. For example John Frearson and I attended the AGM of the Morris Federation (October 1st) and John will be going to the AGM of the Open Morris later on in the year.

Finding suitable funding is not going to be easy but there are various grant-awarding Bodies that support cultural activities within the UK. We are looking at the possibilities of applying

for funding for the promotion of the Morris right across the board. At the same time individual clubs should be focusing on their Local Authorities etc., for possible funding. All these items will be discussed at the next meeting of the Advisory Council (November 18th) and I will be reporting back to you at a later date. The Squire's regalia has been updated. My thanks to David Hart, silver-smith, and member of Chipping Campden MM, for the engraving. Thank you all for the invitations to Ales and Feasts. I am looking forward to a full and varied series of weekends in the months ahead.

*With best wishes,  
Gerald.*



*"The Officers are servants of the Ring . . ."*

*Photo: ED*



## Correspondence

From Leonard Pepper

Dear Eddie,

**A**s a club, we were very disappointed that the report from Fools and Animals 1999 in Circular 35 should have featured a sustained attack on one individual. It seems rather dishonest, as well, to be so free with denunciation and yet not name the person concerned. It gives the whole thing the feel of a personal vendetta. We are pretty sure we know who is under attack. We know him and respect him, and we have seen for ourselves how easily the public respond to him and join in, and then show their appreciation by putting money in the bag.

So we went back to the source of the complaint in the Ring Bagman's Newsletter no. 9 (July 1999), which openly admitted to being nothing more than 'a personal view', although it did then try to draw general conclusions. There was no evidence offered for the claim that what one Fool, or some Fools, did on the said night in June 1999 was 'tiresome for all'. The Fools and Animals participants decided all

the same to debate the matter further, and they decided to concentrate on the alleged misdeeds of 'one particular Fool', focussing rather more narrowly than the original article. How did they arrive at that identification?

Mike Wilkinson darkly mentions 'a number of occasions' when offence has reportedly been caused by the 'bad Fool', but without being specific. It was on the basis of this extremely vague collection of complaints, then, that they decided to 'disown him'. We were not aware that the Fools and Animals participants had any authority to do this? Is the United Fools' Union now a closed shop with the power to decide who can be a Fool and who can't? It seems to be another count in the indictment of the 'bad Fool' that he doesn't attend their meetings, but we want to ask again, who set them up to judge? Is their verdict really any more significant than a group of schoolchildren telling another child that they won't play with him any more? That is what makes it sound to us like personal animus.

This has all dragged on for a year now, based on nothing very substantial. Do we really want

differences within the Morris Ring to be pursued like this? None of it was worth putting into print in the first place. If there was anything to be said it should have been said face-to-face, worked through and settled. All this dragging of hints and nudges into print, but without naming anyone is childish. We hope it stops now! Yours sincerely,

**Leonard Pepper, for  
Whitchurch Morris  
Men**

## Where are they now?

Dear Eddie

**I**t is such a pity that the Cambridge News dug out one of the worst photographs of the Cambridge Morris Men and that Gordon Ridgewell used it for his "Where are they now" feature in the Circular. Particularly as those taken by the News on their next occasion with us were some of the best.

The photo in question was taken at about 6.15 p.m., an hour before the official opening and well before the men were ready, as the very sickening

photographer insisted that he must have a photo but must go elsewhere. **Russell Wortley** played one bar, the photo was taken and we never saw the chap again. For many years a copy of the photo hung in the pub, but thankfully it has now been lost. However it is recorded in our log that we enjoyed a large amount of fish, from salmon to cockles, and similar buffet food. After a speech from the Managing Director, we gave a good twenty minute show and some of the men stayed until half past nine drinking at no personal cost. In addition we received a letter of thanks and a cheque for three guineas for our efforts.

To answer Gordon's questions:- **Cyril Papworth** (the Squire), known for his book etc on the Molly, only dances very occasionally now, behind him is **David Rabson** who is featured in "On the Move" earlier in the Circular, dancing at 5 is Cyril's son **Roderick** who unfortunately has stopped dancing. At 2 is Simon Rothenberg (now in South America), whose father many men will remember as the fool in a kilt for East Surrey, **Leo Courtney** is the one who didn't have time to put on both his bells and like **Russell** is now deceased, and -

*yours truly, the fool,  
John Jenner.*



North Wood Morris dancing "Therapia Lane" from the Beddington tradition, at Bridgwater. Photo: ED

## Correspondence (cont.)

### From Julian Pilling

#### Editor's Note

I am grateful to Julian Pilling for the following extract from 'The Ordeal of Ivor Gurney' (Hurd M., OUP, 1978). Ivor Gurney was a composer & poet serving in the BEF in 1915.

SOME relief from army futilities came in August 1915 when it was decided to form a military band & Gurney found himself involved, 'playing the baryton, a bass cornet arrangement. It is a fine instrument, and three days practice – even to me – are inadequate to do it justice.' According to a fellow-bandsman he was even allowed to conduct, when the band sergeant was on the

sick list, & 'the ease and the phrasing of our playing was unbelievable'. Gurney was delighted with the change & wrote to Marion Scott about it:

*"I count myself lucky to be in the band. Fancy getting an interesting job in the noble profession of arms! There's something wrong within the state of Denmark. We made our debut at this (Sunday) morning's Church-Parade with that first of all march tunes 'Marching through Georgia' – bugles and brass. O, but it was hard work! The band is a soft job usually, but not on the march. Our chaps march splendidly, as they can when they choose."*

*In this band I have discovered a delightful creature. A great broad chested heavy chap who has been a morris dancer and whose fathers and grandfathers, uncles and other relations know all the folksong*

*imaginable. 'High Germanie', 'High Barbary', 'O No John', 'I'm Seventeen come Sunday' – whole piles of 'em. He is a very good player too and a kind of uncle to the band. Chock full of an immense tolerance and good humour and easy to get on with. I loved him for his great simplicity, and hope to be like him someday. So strong in himself, set fast on strong foundations. Not likely to be troubled with neurasthenia. He whistled 'Constant Billy' which I had never heard before."*

### Folk Bazaar – a Celebration of Folk

#### Cecil Sharp House

Saturday 16th December 2000:

1 pm-6pm – Admission **FREE**

Always wanted to know what goes on at Cecil Sharp House but afraid to ask? Looking for some funky Xmas presents but hate Xmas shopping? Or simply fancy a fun family day out?

A huge collection of antiques and curiosities and that's just the organisers! Includes: **Carless Folk Boot Sale** and **Collectors' Fair** (could be anything from folk records and books, to maypole ribbons and old clogs)

- Auction of donated folk goods and skills
- Presentations and displays by different folk dance, song, story and music clubs
- Children's area with storytelling, workshops, and children's entertainer
- Library, café and bar open all day

(There is also a choice of dances on in the evening if you fancy making a night of it - call for info and ticket prices)

## The Ridgewell files

Received	Subject
17.v.2000:	spelling, Circular frequency & the Newspaper Library
19.v.2000:	The Express (1.v.1999); Seated Morris Men
22.v.2000:	Sunday Mirror (12.iii.2000:); Norfolk Morris (?) & picture
2.vi.2000:	Herts. & Essex Observer 17.ii.2000:); Bill Warder's Funeral at Thaxted
9.vi.2000:	News of the World (9.iv.2000:); Bacup banned from bridge!
16.vi.2000:	The Sun (11.iv.2000:); morris restorer & dancer marry
21.vi.2000:	The Independent (28.iv.2000:); "How to Morris Dance..." with photo of Ravensbourne
23.vi.2000:	The Times (29.iv.2000:); bun-hurling vicar at Wath-on-Deane
27.vi.2000:	The Guardian (15.iv.2000:); Nine Daies Wonder
	Royston & Buntingford Mercury; (21.iv.2000:); same with photo of Pat Whittaker
4.vii.2000:	The Daily Telegraph (1.v.2000:); "May Day is for merry men"
6.vii.2000:	The Times (5.v.2000:); Giants at Hastings
10.vii.2000:	The Watford Observer (5.v.2000:); "Morris man wins job to shout about"
13.vii.2000:	Hertfordshire Mercury (5.v.2000:); photos of Standon & Offley

Received	Subject
17.vii.2000:	The Times (9.v.2000); Parliamentary Sketch mention of "remedial Morris Dancing classes..."
19.vii.2000:	News of the World (14.v.2000:); "Northants juju looks like morris dancer"
21.vii.2000:	The Observer (21.v.2000:); "Morris dancers find street cred"
24.vii.2000:	Photos from Thaxted (Past Squires)
26.vii.2000:	More photos from Thaxted
26.vii.2000:	The Watford Observer (26.v.2000:); Woodside Morris photo
28.vii.2000:	The Times (29.v.2000:); "Make this the week that you take up morris dancing"
1.viii.2000:	The Guardian (6.vi.2000:); "Guillotine gives morris-dancing member the chop"
2.viii.2000:	Herts. & Essex Observer (8.vi.2000:); photo of Thaxted Saturday evening procession
3.viii.2000:	Blackening-up from various sources (10 – 18.vi.2000:)
15.viii.2000:	Cambridge Evening News (20.vi.2000:); Thaxted Morris Boys
16.viii.2000:	Evening Standard (30.vi.2000:); Claudia Croft & the Bagman
26.ix.2000:	Cambridge Evening News (2.v.2000:); "All the fun of the fair" – the 800th Reach Fair!

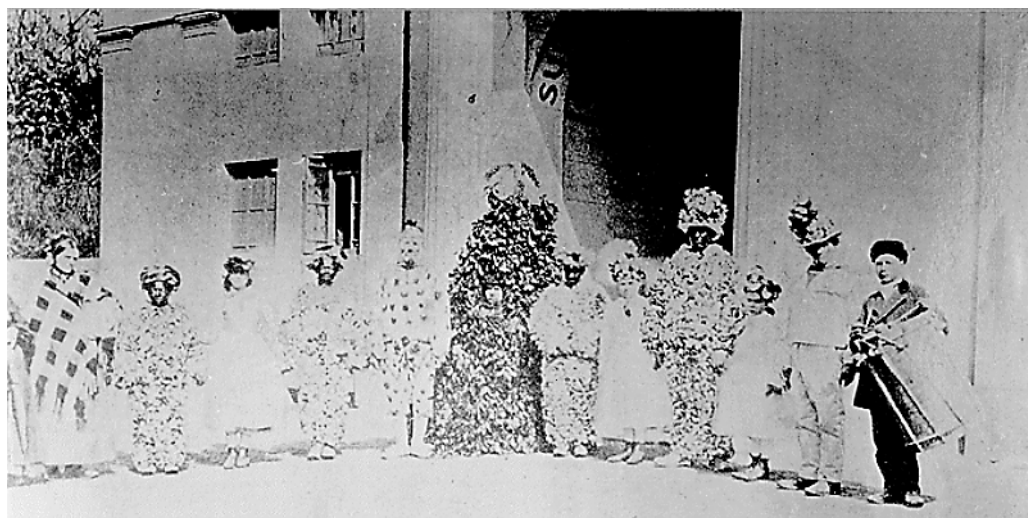


# Jack in the Green: Hastings, 2000:

Keith Leech

The Hastings Jack in the Green is a revival of the nineteenth century Jack in the Green which used to be paraded by the local chimney sweeps. We are fortunate in Hastings to have many references to the custom in local newspapers; most of the research was done by Roy Judge, (who incidentally was brought up in Hastings very near where the sweeps had previously lived) and completed by myself. I had been involved with the newly revived Jacks in the Green in London and upon moving to Hastings contrived to bring the custom back to the town. The Jack in the Green was revived by Mad Jack's Morris in 1983. That first year was a small affair, the Jack fell apart and was a good learning experience.

In subsequent years other local teams were invited and the event began to grow. We asked Hastings Borough Council for some financial assistance and the reply was to think big and invite forty different teams. This we did and the whole thing



*A Nineteenth Century version of Jack in the Green*

*All photos: KL*

has blossomed, we have never looked back and both local teams, Mad Jacks and Daisy Roots are involved in the planning all year.

We seem to have hit a winning formula which requires just a little annual tweaking. Friday night we meet in the pub for a session and put on a ceilidh in a nearby hall for those who want to shake off the cobwebs of travelling. On Saturday we have a



*The Islington Garland*

massed stand and then teams are free to go off in groups to dance outside various pubs and pedestrian precincts. Regular teams have their favourite places and newcomers quickly learn where to go. In earlier years we tried bus tours of Sussex, but teams prefer to just walk from stand to stand, and in this way they get in more dancing. We have found that not organising tours works best as teams can then dance as much or as little as they wish without feeling any pressure. Saturday night we book a known band for a ceilidh, which is always a nightmare because we need to find a

venue large enough to accommodate forty Morris teams. In the past we used Hastings Pier Ballroom, but this is currently suffering from lack of funds and sadly sinking slowly into the sea, so we are left with the local echo chamber known as the sports centre.

Sunday morning bright and early we go to church in one of Hastings two medieval churches. We are welcomed by the local parish, morris musicians provide the music for the hymns, Psalm 150 is read and a local dancer does a jig. We have a rousing chorus of Blakes Jerusa-



*The Dawn Dance*



lem and then dance in the churchyard. Sunday afternoon is a relaxed affair where dancers go to either continue dancing, drinking, or to see the crowning of the May Queen or even the to beach. Sunday evening we have a concert or a dance or even both.

May Day Bank Holiday Monday is the big day, and this year particularly big because May 1st fell on the Bank Holiday in a millennium year. Four thirty (a.m.) saw various bodies crawling up to the Ladies Parlour (England's first jousting ground) overlooking the sea on the cliff tops by Hastings castle. Spectators were already gathering and the Hastings green men (known locally as the Bogeymen) were out in force. The Bogeymen are the attendants of Jack in the Green for the day and carry him in turns. Bogeymen are drawn from local Morris sides and the Bonfire Society and selected mainly for their 'foolish' abilities. This year there were over 100 people dancing and at least as many spectators.



### *Jack in the Green & his attendant Bogeymen*

Garland with new Esperance Morris were also present (on the grounds that all of London

ers' holiday and as the procession wound along Hastings seafront there were thousands of expensive motorcycles going the other way. Not a clash of cultures as you might expect but a real holiday atmosphere!

stage accompanied by drummers and was danced around. At the end of the dance he was raised up triumphantly and all people present were invited to take a leaf or flower home with them.

Finally the group reached Hastings Castle and each team was invited to do a show dance on the main stage, while Jack in the Green surveyed it all from the top of the castle mound. At 3.15pm Jack in the Green was ceremonially led down to the

It really is a great day and the high point of the year in Hastings: people talk about the Morris dancers coming to town for months afterwards and always comment on our good behaviour and fun spirit. We would love to see even more



### *The Bogeymen*

Time for breakfast, and then off to the old Fisherman's church to see the Jack in the Green. By the time people arrive the Bogeymen and Jack are already inside and the constant thump of drums fills the air. After a short speech by the Town Crier Jack in the Green is released. This year was unique as the Deptford Jack in the Green with Fowlers Troop and the Islington May

would be at the coast so they may as well come too!). We also invited dancing giants from around England who looked splendid. The procession of Morris sides and giants then danced around the streets of Hastings' old Fishing quarter, led by Jack in the Green and with a beer and dance stop at the pedestrian precinct on the way. The occasion was also the bik-



### *The Giants*



teams come, and cordially invite the members of the Morris Ring to Jack in the Green 2001. Any team that is interested should contact me by October.

*The Morris Dance Discussion List Digest for 29/30 May carried the following posting from Keith:*

MDDLers may be interested in this from the Hastings Old Town parish news after this year's *Jack in the Green* service.

Dear Friends

On Bank Holiday Monday May 1st many of us in the Old Town witnessed the happy events and activities which abounded that day. The weather was not quite as good as 1999, but that did not seem to dampen the spirits of those who were here. The car parks were full of motor cycles (and what splendid machines some of them were!) children bouncing around The Stade with happy Mums and Dads; queues outside the fish and chip shops; seagulls waiting as ever for the left overs! Morris dancers too dancing their way through the streets in and out of the pubs and of course, joining in the procession through the Old Town, following Jack o' the Green, giants and all!

What was not so well known was that many of the Morris came to St. Clement's Church on the Sunday of that weekend to join in with the congregation for a celebration which happens every Sunday. The choir and clergy entered; the organ stopped – just silence. Then came the Morris dancing into the church: they shared the whole service, providing dance and music. It was all very good. The community and the church were united in a celebration which acknowledged both the new life of the risen Lord Jesus Christ (primarily celebrated on Easter Day) and the gifts of God's creation, renewed in Spring.

Even Christians sometimes fail to acknowledge openly the wonders of the created world and here the Celtic Christians of the 4th – 11th centuries could teach



*Jack in the Green gives up his leaves*

us respect and gratitude for a world order we can never re-create, but which we find so easy to destroy. So, to those of you who stayed away because of 'pagan practices', I am sorry you were not with us to experience a real joy at our celebration of new life! Yet the New Life for the Christian speaks of the inner man or woman reborn in the likeness of Jesus Christ. Perhaps on Sea Sunday each year, the fishing community of Hastings could attend All Saints Church for a service to acknowledge and give thanks for the sea – its power; its ability to provide; its source of income for fishermen; its sheer beauty. Just an idea!

*Fr. Iain.*



*The Squire having a quiet drink at Thaxted*

*Photo: JF*



# England Dances: Romanska International Dance Theatre

Eddie Dunmore

At the end of May the Morris Dance Discussion List carried some comment concerning this show, arising from a feature in The Observer of 21st May. Several list members, including me, emailed the author (anyone from Hartley?) and actually received replies. Two days later I was phoned by a producer from Newsnight (BBC2) who wanted background for a projected item on "essentials of Englishness": the conversation lasted nearly an hour and probably gave her more historical information on the morris (thanks to John Forrest, Mike Heaney, Keith Chandler, Roy Dommett et al) than was good for her.

Right on cue I received publicity material detailing the touring schedule for "England Dances" together with a request for publicity. I rang the originator, Caroline Durant, to point out that the Circular was biannual and that the next issue was due for mailing out in early August (good intentions!). We discussed the possibility of a review and so Margaret & I found ourselves sitting in the

Ashcroft Theatre, Croydon, on the evening of 8th June.

The show opened with a sequence of dances from the 15th & 16th Centuries performed to canned music: a linked serpentine Courante, a Matachin, a Pavane, a Volta & a Galliard. These were all more or less as I expected and the Matachin pulled me back to the third Ravensbourne Ring Meeting and the Colne Royal Friday night party piece. Unfortunately, to my eyes & ears at least, the remainder of the show was much less enjoyable. Will Kemp was portrayed in plain rustic attire rather than in his elaborate morris coat (see the cover of The Morris Book, any edition, for a reproduction of the woodcut from "The Nine Daies Wonder"). The music was recognisably Bampton "Bacca Pipes"; it was followed immediately by "Queens Delight" & with a melodeon! The performance seemed to have some fleeting resemblance to a poorly-seen & misinterpreted Bucknell and was untidily performed. The reason for a "country dance" danced to the "Coal Black Smith" variant of the "Twa Magicians" still escapes me.

Then there was a stick dance to the "Cutty Wren" & a "Bean Setting" that, again, had a vanishingly tenuous connection with anything done by Headington Quarry. For the followers of "faerie" there was a "Green Man" & then a maypole dance: this was another anachronism involving plaiting. The least said about "Lumps of Plum Pudding" the better but it certainly resembled no Bledington that I've ever seen or danced. The first half of the show finished with a totally farcical mummies' play in which the symbolism was confused & confusing: the quack doctor sequence was even embarrassing.

The second half opened with sailor songs & the shanties took me back to the early seventies & an Albert Hall Show that had the Spinners being wheeled on & off on what appeared to be a mobile dining table while London Folk mimed what passed for the actions. There was a sailors' hornpipe danced to a recording of "The Last Night of the Proms" and the only light relief was a "Sailors' Clog Dance" that was at least respectable. The sword dance, described as "English Long Sword" was done at a skip(!) &

the nuts were (again) embarrassing. Of "Rush Hour" & the finale I prefer not to comment.

If this all sounds negative, I guess that I react badly to attempts at tarding-up a dance form that I am still trying to learn after 30+ years' involvement. I resent the carelessness of notes that tell me that the matachin was "the beginning of fencing as codified by Henry VIII in a book called 'Orchesography'": if Thoinot d'Arbeau plagiarised a previously unknown work of a monarch who was dead long before the book was published in 1589 (the year after the Armada?), I think we should know. However, the program notes, and the voice-over narration, oscillated between tendentiousness and plain error. I must record that Margaret was distinctly unimpressed with a narrator who teamed brown casual shoes with white tie & tails & I was less than impressed with his obvious lack of familiarity with his script.

In essence, I guess the idea of attempting to take our inheritance of dances to the unconverted is a good one. It is a matter of profound regret that the standards of research & performance are such that I cannot foresee over much success.

## ENGLAND DANCES

### — ROMANSKA INTERNATIONAL DANCE THEATRE

Reply to Eddie Dunmore's Review by Stephen Rouse,  
Artistic Director of Romanska and originator of England Dances.

I fully accept that some of Eddie's criticisms of our show must be en squarely on the chin. However, I find it hard to recognise our otherwise enthusiastically received show in Eddie's rather discouraging and, to my mind, excessively negative review. Here are just two examples of newspaper reviews: "This production was alive from start to finish, with never a fallow period. The Mor-

ris and clog work was faultless and few can have failed to have been moved by the bloodcurdling shanties and hornpipes With the backdrop of triumphant St George slaying the dragon, this was a midsummers night's dream of a show,"

(John Phillpott, Evening News, Glos).

"... stories of press gangs, workers' rights marches and an incredible

dance about factory workers. The choreography was breathtaking, the ability of the dancers without parallel and the audience loved it!" (Audrey Owens, Clacton Gazette, Essex).

So I have to ask myself the question; why do some of the more established English folk dance fraternity take such a disappointingly stern view of our work? ... With half the population flocking to American line

dance classes, the other half rushing to do Latin salsa, almost anything but English dance in fact, I would have thought an English dance show that gets reviews such as the two above from the non-specialist public can do nothing but good for all concerned!

Perhaps Romanska should clarify its position in the spectrum of folk or folk-related dance to which we all belong. We are not



a folk dance company as such, we are what is termed in professional parlance a *Character Dance* company. One definition of character dance is “*the artistic synthesis of folk and ballet steps through choreographic creation*” (**Mikhail Berkut**). It is a theatrical genre encompassing the study of national dances, individual characters and social groups and their adaption for the professional stage. This is clearly not just “*tarting up a dance form*” as Eddie claims it to be.

Character dance has hitherto never been very visible in England. Obviously then, our work should not be judged on the same basis as any previous stagings of English dance, such as those at the Royal Albert Hall or The Everlasting Circle or anything you may have seen at a festival. We are not attempting to be the same as or a replacement for any of the folk dance activity which already exists in England, this would be pointless. We are complementary to - not in competition with - the English folk dance fraternity. As a complementary part of your own dance spectrum we desperately need not only your support but your curiosity and imagination.

Perhaps this is a good time to admit that England Dances is totally unfunded except from my own pocket and many hours of voluntary work from a handful of totally committed company members who are inspired by the dream of English dance as exciting theatre, though half of them are not even English!!!

Although I myself am English, for most of my career I have had to perform other nation's dances in order to earn a living. I resented that so much that I decided to risk all on the dream or an English equivalent to Riverdance. I spent a year researching not just material for the show but English people's attitudes to the idea. The outlook was very grim indeed. Perhaps if you are a member of the folk fraternity, it is all too easy to forget just how much of a minority activity it is day, but the fact is, ninety-nine per cent of

the English population regard their own dances as utterly boring and something of a joke! The only word which seems to wake them up is Riverdance. So is this the time to be deliberating whether our choreography faithfully represents one village or another, especially when the experts themselves often seem to be in dispute? I thought not. How should we begin the search for a dance show representative of all that could be called the cultural memory of England? Whereas Russian or Spanish dance, for example, have had at least two hundred years of professional adaptation for the stage and are still regarded as ‘Folk’ by theatre goers. English dance has not.

So what are the qualities which should be magnified or evolved for the stage? It seemed to me that they were different to many of the other countries. I look for elements such as the essence of ritual, the ability to laugh at oneself, innocence, joy, passion, the feeling of an epoch. I chose traditional folklore figures to

expand upon and divided the show into broad dance categories of time and geography. Studying the folk symphonies of Vaughan-Williams, Percy Grainger and Gustav Holst, I realised that we should aspire to be their equivalent in dance - a very high aspiration indeed!

After many months of sweaty experiment in the studio, which no one was paid for, and innumerable changes of cast (which we still suffer as, one after another, dancers are lured away by full-time paid contracts) we arrived at our far from perfect debut of England Dances generously sponsored by The De La Warr Pavilion Theatre, Bexhill-on-Sea. To my surprise, many Morris and clog dancers turned up, actually enjoyed it, and told us so! The follow-up bookings had to be cancelled due to total lack of interest from the public, for example just seven tickets sold out of fourteen hundred at The Wintergarden Theatre, Margate! After six months of intense study on the publicity we achieved

twelve performances some of which have almost broken even this year. We are planning to double the amount of shows next Spring and hope to involve local folk groups around the tour in discussion forums on how we can better achieve our dream.

Opinions have differed so widely that the discussion has become interesting to me in its own right. However, if we cannot better our audiences, the whole thing stops. So, please don't just take Eddie's word for it, come and see England Dance for yourselves next Spring - you'll either love it or hate it and if you hate it, please tell your friends you hate it so much they have to go and see it!

*PS: Wipe your glasses Eddie, we are not ‘skipping’ the longsword dance, as you claim, only the entrance and exit to the dance. The longsword itself is always ‘limped’ as it should be. ... Perhaps you had just given up on us by then!*

## The Nine Daies Wonder 2000:

**John Frearson**

**T**HE “Nine Daies Wonder” was re-danced in eight consecutive days

for its 400th Anniversary. This is rather better than the 12 separate days over a pe-

riod of five weeks by William Kemp in 1600.

*Continued at the foot of page 10*



*Dancers & Musicians who completed the full Nine Daies; with friends including John Tarling (Rumford) of the organising team)*

*Photo: JF*

# WOMEN IN MORRIS . . . WELL , WHAT CAN I SAY ?

*Note: The views expressed are personal, and do not necessarily represent those of Anker M.M.*

**A**LAN DANDY'S extended response to the "can of worms" debate makes some useful points, but I feel what is needed at the moment is a concise defence of the position on women dancing (or not dancing) Morris. The will keep coming up, as regular mentions in the Press indicate, and a coherent response shared by member teams of the Ring would be a good idea. What follows may seem a statement of the blindingly obvious to some, but I think a clear statement is needed, rather than a silent consensus. Three main points need to be dealt with; (though I should say these apply to Cotswold; the Sword and North-West communities will have to work out their own salvation).

## "It's a Male Ritual".

This is a dead duck. It has quietly been allowed to die in recent years, but regularly pops up in dealings with the Press. The point is that extensive historical studies have made it quite clear that the "Morris is a male fertility ritual" idea is a folklorists' figment, and totally untenable historically. Any man using this in the face of hostile questions will look foolish, especially as the questioner may well be aware of the published evidence. In purely PR terms, the general public is fond of the idea, so it is perhaps as well to have a modified explanation to hand, as in the suggestion that early Morris seems to have features of a courtship dance, which might reflect an earlier more basic nature; but no one really knows.

*Continued from page 9*

The photograph at the bottom of the previous page includes Peter Cole of Lichfield, Steve Connelly & Dave Stewart of Kemp's Men & David Marr of Coventry, all of whom ensured that the Morris Ring was represented during the whole odyssey.

## "Womendidn't do

## Morris".

This also is demonstrably untrue. There are records of teams of women dancing Morris during its most popular phase, so a flat denial of the fact is not an option. However, it is plain that such teams were exceptions, and on this basis we can justifiably claim that the main line of the tradition is one of all-male dance, and that we choose to reflect that in the composition of our teams. It would be rash to claim historical accuracy however, given the changes in dance traditions, variation in type of costume worn, and the fact that in most cases teams are no longer based on family/village groups. The emergence of women's and mixed Morris teams in large numbers can be looked at in two ways. The hard-line view would be that they are an ahistorical distortion

of the tradition outlined above. The second view, which is certainly gaining ground, is that they represent an evolution of what was Morris into a related form of dance. Defining the differences is a whole new game of course! It is perhaps as well to be aware that Morris as danced within the Ring has also evolved over the last 60 years - a tradition is not a fossil, though we feel what we do represents (not reproduces) the tradition more faithfully.

## "Womenmusicians".

If the view of the Morris outlined above prevails, then women musicians do not belong with a male team. The Ring chooses to present Morris to the public at official Ring events as a male tradition, and I believe the practice can be defended as in 1. above. However, what needs to be recognised is that merely being an all-male team is

not enough in itself. As Past Squire Barry Care made clear at the ARM, it is the duty of every team to present the highest standard of dance to the public; if we want to be considered custodians of the tradition we believe we follow, anything less will not do.

What I hope is obvious is that in PR terms, we need to be sure of our ground, and prepared to distinguish fact from opinion honestly. Ill-informed dogmatism simply reflects badly on the team and ultimately the Ring.

I hope the above represents a reasonable basic PR kit, though I recognize that elements of the argument are open to debate. Some hold that the tradition as any sort of continuing thing was dead before Sharp started out, others maintain that as the Revival was helped on its way by Sharp's female helpers, by teams like the Esperance Morris, and women musicians playing for men's teams, it is hypocritical to deny women a role now. Also, in the real world, a female musician can make the difference between men continuing to dance and a team folding - which compromises the future of the Morris more? It is probably unwise to get involved in discussion about the competence of women musicians - the purist view is that only a male dancer can play effectively for other male dancers, but most of us can probably think of two or three women musicians with men's teams who play for the dance better than a lot of men. A blind test might be interesting! Finally, the question of how far modern versions of "Folk" music and custom can be considered truly "traditional" at all also looms. . . the debate is bound to continue, though I think it is unlikely to be resolved in a single conclusion.

**Joe Oldaker ( Anker Morris Men)**



*The celebratory sculpture of Will Kemp*

*Photo: JF*



## From Ken Hamilton of Oakworth Village

Dear Sir,

I am writing in reply to the article entitled "So Daniel Opened the Can o Worms!", by Alan Dandy, published in The Circular, issue 35.

The issues raised by Mr. Dandy concerning women have been well debated before, and no

doubt will be again, and, despite Mr. Dandy's unusual ideas, they are not the issues I wish to debate in this reply. It is Mr. Dandy's assertion that the Morris Ring has a target age group of between 35 and 130! The "real facts", as stated by Mr. Dandy are that "between youth and the early thirties, the accelerated pace of change and uncertainty of modern life forge a lifestyle incapable of sustaining the continuity of any tradition". For

one involved in a pastime that is steadily losing popularity with younger people, I find this statement incomprehensible. As the present dancers grow older, who is to replace them? This view is extraordinarily short sighted, and can only lead to stagnation and extinction for the Morris Ring. Youth is the only hope for Morris dancing, and excluding youth from the Ring (by attitude) can only be damaging for the Ring and the public image

of the Ring. In my experience, the view is also erroneous. Our Squire is, by far, the best dancer among us. He has been Squire for 7 years, and has brought a lot to the side, and the side has grown since he became Squire. He is 28 years old.

In addition, by praising the dance skills of ladies Clog and Garland dancers, then asserting that some of the male population may then turn to "true morris", can Mr. Dandy really be implying that Cotswold is the only form of Morris dancing?

As a dancer under the age of 35, I am glad that these comments are only a personal view, because they represent nothing that is valuable to me about Morris dancing, and, I hope, represent nothing in the Morris Ring.

Yours sincerely

**Ken Hamilton**

(A personal view, not necessarily that of Oakworth Village Morris Men collectively or individually)



The Bagman's Newsletter Number 13 contained a short report on **Horwich's Day for St George**.

The two photographs reproduced here show: above – **Bacup** dancing at the last stop of the day; & below – The **Royal Preston** dancers, formed out of the ashes of **Preston Royal & Royal Lancashire**. The mixed mode of dress shows that the new kit had not yet arrived.

Photos: JF



This photo was thrust into my hands by Cliff Marchant of Chanctonbury. It shows the Dean of St Margaret's Westminster joining in (with hat & bladder) during Westminster MM's Day of Dance this year.

Photo: CM



# Adderbury's Golden Jubilee

The 25th Anniversary of the first dancing by the revived Adderbury Side was celebrated in late April. The Side split soon after its formation to form the more locally based **Adderbury Village Side** and the **Adderbury Side**.

**Adderbury Village** had 12 Men and four musicians out for the day; **Adderbury** mustered 24 men, and a wealth of musicians. At one stage the band consisted of six fiddles, two melodeons and a pipe and tabor. Also pleasing was the number of boys taking their full part. What with glorious sunshine and a beautiful village, this was perhaps one of the finest days in a "traditional" village.

For the first time admission was gained to dance on the lawn of **Janet Blunt's** home – and a new dance, complete with tune, was hastily composed for the occasion. In the evening other sides joined the event. I was more than pleased to make up *Bourne River's* numbers, together with **Dave Reed** of *Gloucestershire* (wearing *Village* kit). We danced variously to the playing of **Chris Leslie** (currently Fairport Con-

vention – who, having been volunteered to provide music for an *Oddington* "Highland Mary", provided a new B music!

It was also good to make the acquaintance of **Tubby Reynolds** of *Sherborne*, who indicated that he had been out of touch with Ring matters for many years. He

was reassured that things were now perhaps rather less set in stone than had been the case in the past. **Frank Daniels**, formerly a *Bampton* Man and now *Sherborne*, was celebrating 50 years of dancing and recalled dancing for **Sam Bennett**.

**Dave Reed** (of *Adderbury Village* and *Gloucestershire*) took a 25th anniversary group photo of the "1975" men who were still active and present on the day outside the Bell at lunchtime.

*John Frearson*



*Founder members of the revival Adderbury Side – 25 years on – (l to r: John Leslie; Jim Plester; Bryan Shepperd; Tim Radford; Rob Widdup; Chris Leslie and Chris Hown) opposite the Bell on 29 April 2000. Photo: JF*



## Who is it?

### *A query from the Editor*

I was given this photograph in early June, by an electrician who was installing a new distribution board.

It was taken "South of Chichester", on, or just off the B2145 (which implies somewhere like Donnington) in April 2000:

The kit is white tee-shirts or red sweatshirts teamed with black britches. The bell-pads carry red & yellow ribbons. The band appears to consist of 3 melodeons (2 male & 1 female) & a female flautist. Several of the spectators are wearing clogs, & some of the females are carrying red handkerchiefs

Who are the side?



# THE 281st MEETING OF THE MORRIS RING

## RICHMOND ON SWALE

12th – 14th May 2000:

**T**HE 281st Meeting of the Morris Ring celebrated, in suitably idyllic weather, the conjugation of *Richmondshire* and *Swaledale* Morris Men as the *Richmond on Swale Morris Men*. Thirteen Sides plus the host Side – some 150 men – attended the Meeting. Those present were: *Bristol, Boar's Head, Dolphin, East Suffolk, Exeter, Green Ginger, Harthill, Icknield Way, Offley, Rutland, Standon, Wath upon Dearne, & Wyre Forest*.

The main centre of activity on Friday evening was the Black Lion and much beer was consumed, including a particular strong malty brew, Richmond Ale (4.8%) from the Darwin Brewery in Durham. Some informal dancing took place in the pedestrianised road outside until just before midnight, when the gathering was "locked in". Singing and music steadily took over all three bars until 1:00am. An Icknield Way combo led by **Sem Seabourne** was of notable and sustained quality.

On Saturday, after a substantial breakfast at the Black Lion, the



*Sem Seabourne*

Sides embussed for three leisurely tours, visiting a range of villages in the Dales. The Squire's Party spent the morning with one tour, and in the afternoon the Squire and Bagman switched Tours, whilst the Treasurer and Squire Elect remained loyal to their original Tour. In Reith, a Side from each bus was sent to each of the three pubs on the Green to ensure further social interaction and to

Cold Meat platter with hot potatoes and bowls of salads; Apple Pie and Cream; Cheese and Biscuits; and Coffee.

The Top Table guests were: The Mayor of Richmond, Ann Frizell; the Deputy Mayor, Clive World; The Mayor Elect, John Harris; and the Baroness, House of Richmond, Lady Angela Harris (a former Mayor, and newly appointed to the



*Icknield Way at The Rose & Crown. Photos: JF*

spread the load as each bus arrived. After (& during) lunch, Sides danced outside the central Hotel (The King's Arms). Further dancing later broke out at other spots on the green – especially adjacent to a Hen Party which provided a willing audience, and much amusement.

The Feast was held in the Town Hall. The beers available were White Boar (4.2%) and Bull (4.6%) both brewed by Hambleton of Thirsk for the Village Brewer; and Priscilla Pale (3.9%) and Old Gang Bitter (4.9%) from the Swaledale brewery of Gunnerside – their beers being named for various Mines. The menu was Starter;

Lords). They were joined by the Ring Officers: The Squire, Daniel Fox; the Squire Elect, Gerald Willey; the Bagman, John Frearson and the Treasurer, Steve Adamson; and the Squire of Richmond on Swale, Leo Nugent.

The Speeches and Toasts followed: The Squire proposed the Loyal Toast in whiskey – donated by grateful pubs. The Squire Elect proposed The Immortal Memory, and his words upon the day included some reference to the many sheep ("a mistake – but he will learn", quoth the Squire) which led to much baa-ing from the Men! Leo Nugent welcomed those present to

the first Ring Meeting of the Millennium, and the first where the Host Side would dance into the Ring at their own meeting. He introduced the Mayor of Richmond who welcomed those present including a reference to Daniel Fox as the "Ringmaster". She announced that she would not sing, but related a story concerning "wind" and chicken giblets (which is probably unfit to be detailed here!)

The Squire's "principal and pleasurable duty" was to collect the Staffs of Membership from the representatives of the Richmondshire and Swaledale Morris Men, and to present a new Staff to the Richmond on Swale Morris Men. In proposing the health of the new club, he asked that they keep in guardianship the staff of the former Richmondshire Side.

The Baroness, House of Richmond then gave the "Reply by a Friend" and said a few words, before the singing was started. There were songs from Bristol, "It's Only the Moon to Guide the Rover"; Wath, "Hanging on the Old Barbed Wire" a poignant song appropriate to a town with



*Sunday Refreshment*



so many military connections; Boar's Head lightened the mood with a "Squashed Moggie"; Wyre Forest, a shanty "Did you ever see a Wild Goose"; Offley, "The Travelling Nation"; and the Hosts finished with "The Galway Shawl". The entourage then dispersed into Richmond and toward the Black Lion, where there was again dancing outside the pub and after the lock in, singing and music until about 200am.

On Sunday the majority attended the Parish Eucharist at the St Francis Xavier's RC Church. During the first hymn, the Squires presented their staffs at the altar. After the Service, two dances were presented for the congregation. The Men formed up for a Winster Processional into the town, led by the Ring Officers and the Mayor and her Deputy. The Mass Show included a show dance from every Side, as well as four massed dances and Bonny Green. The penultimate dance, from the Host Side was their opportunity to "dance in" to the

Morris Ring in their new form. They danced "Room for the Cuckoo" from Wheatley. It was later discovered that for one member of the Side, Keith Giddens, this was the fourth occasion on which he had danced into the Ring. The previous occasions had been with Mansfield at Uttoxeter in September 1982, Ripley at Moulton in September 1983, Richmondshire at Claro in July 1987 and now with Richmond on Swale in Richmond in 2000. He wondered if this was a record.

After the show, the Men made their way to the Town Hall for a buffet lunch. There was a brief interlude whilst the Host Side danced "The Lass of Richmond Hill" for the Mayor, who was hoisted aloft at its completion. The pictures taken at the finish appeared to include an item of female under-apparel. Madam Mayor continued to be amused!! As a final item, The Fool of Wath handed round delicate toasts with marmalade — it was said that an essential delicacy, i.e. the marmalade, had

been conspicuous by its absence at breakfast at the Black Lion and he wished to make amends!!

It was a well-run weekend — congratulations to Richmond on Swale, particularly their Squire, Leo Nugent and the Meeting Bagman, Jim McCaffery, whose

attention to detail ensured that all the arrangements under their control went without a hitch. We thank them all — and how did they manage the sunshine throughout!

*John Frearson*



*The hosts (in new kit) at Reith, Saturday*

# Abingdon Mayor Making

*John Frearson*

**M**AYOR'S Day 2000: (17 June) and Abingdon TMD celebrated the 300th Anniversary of the date on the Horns and elected their Mayor. A marvellous hot day, but with a gentle breeze — and it was Bampton's turn to visit Abingdon. This was the Daniel's Team, and together with Headington Quarry (for the afternoon) and Chipping Campden, provided a full set of the "Traditional Cotswold" sides. Guests also included Sherborne, and from Abingdon's twin towns in Belgium and France respectively, the Boerke Naas sword dancers and flag-throwers from Sint Niklaas, and La Gigouais Sabotiers from Argentan, Normandy.



*Boerke Naas raising the sword lock*

*Photos: JF*



# Abingdon Mayor Making (continued)

Dancing took place through the day: in the morning outside the Black Swan and in the Market Square; after lunch on three "tours" with dancing at the Almshouses and the various pubs along Ock Street - The White Horse, The Air Balloon, The Cross Keys and the Brewery Tap. At one of these the Bagman was prevailed upon to pose for a photograph with a young lady; only later did he find she was a reporter for the London Evening Standard and he was to illustrate an article on said reporter's "Weekend in the Coun-

try" the following Friday. (See press photo!!)

At about 3.30 everyone arrived at the Brewery Tap (outside the now closed Morland Brewery) where the ballot box had been since early morning. The French dancers got everyone dancing social dances (English and French) while the ballot papers were counted. "The result was announced by the Mayor of Abingdon: Leslie Argyle (31), Stuart Jackson (99) and Rod James (33). Stuart Jackson was therefore re-elected as Mayor of



*The Mayoral Candidates*



*The Mayor in procession (above): Abingdon Market Square (below)*



Ock Street and presented with the insignia of office – sashes, sword and cup. After his acceptance speech and various photographs had been taken, he was chaired up and down a section of Ock Street. Each of the dance groups then danced, including jigs from Bampton and Sherborne.

After tea, the dancers processed (with chaired mayor) to the town square where a couple of thousand people had assembled for the "Bun Throwing" at 6.30pm. This takes place in Abingdon on special occasions – the last time was the birth of Prince William. On this occasion it celebrated the three Ms – the Morris (ATMD 30th anniversary of the Horns date), the Millennium; and the Queen Mother's impending 100th birthday. After the Abingdon town band had played and the ATMD danced, the Mayor of Abingdon plus councillors arrived in procession in full civic regalia and proceeded to climb to the roof of the County Hall. They then threw down the buns on the assembled crowds. The Bagman managed to catch an "Archival" bun



# THE 282nd MEETING OF THE MORRIS RING

## Thaxted

2nd – 4th June 2000:

**S**ixteen Sides – some 200 men – attended the Meeting. The guest Sides were: - Belchamp St Paul, Dolphin, East Suffolk, Helier, Jockey, King John's, Letchworth, Milton [dancing in as a Full Member Side], Oakworth Village, Spring Grove, Standon, Sweyn's Ey, Uttoxeter Heart of Oak, Westminster and Whitchurch.

Friday supper was provided as usual at the *Rose & Crown*. Some remained there for singing into the evening. *The Star* appeared to have had a new Landlord who had not catered for dancing, however, this was offset by the *Swan*, which was keen to renew links after several fallow years and had left dancing space in the yard. Their ale quality had also improved immeasurably, and to prove it they donated the beer for the Feast. There was informal dancing by Thaxted and Oakworth Village. Fortunately there were sufficient "residents" to ensure ale could continue to be sold until a late hour.

Saturday dawned fine and warm, a marked contrast to the



*Planning the evening show.*

*Photo: JoannaF*

previous week or so, and the weather for the Saturday tours stayed excellent. The four tours visited the traditional range of villages in the area. There was also a "Squire's Tour", which visited each of the four main tours. The Tours returned to Thaxted for tea.

After tea the Men made their way to each end of the High

spite the road closure officially finishing at 700pm. In the event Uttoxeter passed on their turn until after the Feast. The majority of men made their way to the Village Hall for the Feast – although a number had made their own arrangements.

The menu for the Feast was Soup; Beef Casserole and various vegetables; Fruit Meringue; and Coffee. Men from Cambridge; Helier; Jockey; King John's; Letchworth; Milton; Spring Grove; Uttoxeter and Westminster were present to welcome the Guest of Honour, John Hunter, the son of the Morris Ring's first Squire, Alec Hunter. Also on the top table were **The Squire**, Daniel Fox; **the Bagman**, John Frearson; **the Treasurer**, Steve Adamson, **the Squire Elect**, Gerald



*East Suffolk (including Past Squire Mike Garland)*



*Milton Morris dancing in*

*Photos: JF*

Street to form up for the start of the Processions. These set out at 6pm; the first Massed Show followed. During the show Milton danced in as Full Members of the Morris Ring; they danced "Old Woman Tossed Up" from Fieldtown and their dance was introduced with the song. The show lasted until 7.20pm, de-

Wiley; **Past Squire** Tim Sercombe and the **Area Representative** John Tarling. The Speeches followed: The Squire proposed the Loyal Toast – and in view of Helier's presence, joined this with the health of the Duke of Normandy. The Immortal Memory was proposed by Squire Elect, Gerald





### *Helier Morris dancing on Sunday morning*

Wiley; he noted that Sharp had "broken the oral tradition". The Toast to the Thaxted Morris Men was proposed by Past Squire Tim Sercombe; the Squire of Thaxted, Cohn Townsend replied.

The Squire then presented the Staff of Membership to Milton. There was time for only two songs before the start of the evening show: Milton sang for their supper: they produced a song of their own composition about Bagmen – the chorus including the line "All the Bagmen want is money". They were followed by **Past Squire** Bert Cleaver, in Dolphin attire, who sang one of the songs of Clifford Yelden that he had recently "rediscovered".

By the end of the Feast at 9.30pm, the weather was looking more overcast, but whilst there was a spit of drizzle in the air this abated for the show and the evening remained fine. The second Massed Show finished on schedule at 9.15pm, the Squire having passed over the

announcer's role to Past Squire, Mike Chandler, so that he could lead the Thaxted Morris Men in the Horn Dance. As usual, the crowd parted, as Jake Walker's solo fiddle stuck up its haunting tune. The Squire of the Ring led the Thaxted Morris Men in the Abbots Bromley Horn Dance to provided the normal climax to the show – raising the hair on the back of the neck and silencing the crowd. The eerie silence of the crowd remained through the entire performance, as they listened to the flawless fiddle playing, watched the dancers and took in the atmosphere. As always, unforgettable.

Afterwards the crowd dispersed and the Men gravitated to The Star and the Swan for a few more dances and to sample the ale. There was also a notably good ale "Moletrap" [3.8%] from the local Maulden's Brewery served direct from the barrel at the wine bar; this was rather less crowded, and cheaper, than many of the pubs! Dancing continued until near midnight and

singing in the "Rose and Crown" until early hours.

On the Sunday – breakfast having been taken in the Hall, the Men assembled in the Town Street at 9.30am, under blue and sunny skies, ready for the procession to make its dignified way to Church for the 10.00am Sung Mass with Sermon. There was the usual considerable Thaxted involvement in the service. The celebrant was the Reverend. Fr. Leonard Pepper BA, Bagman of Whitchurch, and retired vicar of High Wycombe and Director of Pastoral Studies at St Stephen's House, Oxford. The Sermon managed to combine the themes of Morris and the Anniversary of Dunkirk. The Offertory Dance was presented by King John's who danced "Banks of the Dee" from Fieldtown.

Dancing followed in the Churchyard, by the Bullring, from about 11.30 until lunchtime. [Possible photographs: King John's 00/M113; Westminster 00/M117; Helier

00/M119 Thaxted Grandfather's Side 00/M123; The Squire having a quiet drink behind the Horse 00/M120] After lunch, from 2.30 - 4.00pm there was Morris and Country Dancing for all in the Margaret Gardens, Bell Lane. Both the Thaxted Men's and Boy's Sides performed and there were a good number of country dances. In particular it was good to see the energy and enthusiasm of the Thaxted Boys. The afternoon finished with Bonny Green Garters for the remaining Morris Men.

Then all too soon it was over. For most Sides running a Ring Meeting every ten or twenty years is quite enough, but this was Thaxted's 67th Ring Meeting. The entire weekend went smoothly. A pat on the back for each and every member of Thaxted, whom we thank for this unstinting service to the Ring, as Mike Chandler said last year, "Year after Year after Year".

**John Frearson  
Bagman,  
The Morris Ring**



# THE 284th MEETING



*Outside the "Lamb & Lion" at Hambridge, Saturday afternoon*

*Photos: ED*



*Dartington, with youth (one at least) on their side*



*Past Squire Geoff Jerram*



# OF THE MORRIS RING

**Bridgwater**

21st –23rd July



*Winchester taking liberties with the Cross family*



*... And it's Welcome to him.*



*It's Goodbye from him . . .*



*Faithful City being friendly*



## Editorial

**A**N apology is due to you all, once again, for my failure to meet the intended publication date for Circular 36. A house-move compounded with imposed deadline has not helped. We managed to get to Thaxted, doing our own eclectic tour of the pitches, thanks to an email of the itineraries from Richard Morgan. Somehow, eating at a place called Ridgewell, after the display from the teams on Tour A, seemed appropriate - & the food was enjoyable.

The next excursion of note was to Bridgwater, this time with North Wood, to see Gerald dance in & to sample Chalice's hospitality. The journey west was notable initially for the lateness of arrival of our hired minibus (compounded by a diversion into a pub at Green Street Green) & the fact that the nearside wing-mirror was missing due to an over-optimistic estimate of the vehicle's width. After a meal break on the journey (we're all growing lads), we arrived safely at the College.

After confirming that the bar was stocked with drinkable wine (& a selection of beers for those as would) & sampling the cuisine, we joined a major expedition to the Railway pub. There we discovered that the licensee was about to celebrate his birthday, & that Ripley were already in residence. Any of you who have not yet experienced the "Ripley World Tour" should book them immediately. They more than deserved the free drinks that they received. A more enjoyable evening is hard to recall, & we had to insist on leaving at about 1 am (I think). The weather for the Saturday tours was warm & fine. The "Old Baldricks" tour saw a good deal of the Somerset countryside. Our journey included Weston for the mini-massed show, then via Spaxton, Ashcott (lunch), Hambridge & Moorlinch before heading back to Bridgwater. Hambridge was a genuine blast from the past: I had last been here during a Yeovil Ring Meeting in (I think) the late seventies. To return to this year, the official tour was hosted by Bob Cross (whose daughter was on permanent standby for hoisting over the whole weekend) & Andy Foster. A welcome surprise was the inclusion of Tony Hazeldene in the party.

The toasts at the Feast included one, proposed by Tony, to the late President of Chalice; "Reg", better known as Rev. K.N.J.Loveless. Thereafter, the main business of the evening was concerned with the handover of the Squire's Medallion from Daniel to Gerald. The cover picture of this issue shows Gerald returning the compliment in presenting Daniel with his Past Squire's medal.

At 10.15 am on Sunday, we all made our way to the Procession assembly point (in North Wood's case, after a hastily convened practice of our show dance). After the procession, those of us who did not subscribe to the church service made our way to Tesco's for morning coffee: our presence fascinated the Sunday morning shoppers. The Massed Show took place under the watchful gaze of Robert Blake, who appeared unmoved by the experience even when aspiring photographers climbed up to share his plinth. North Wood gave the first public showing of "Therapia Lane", an eight-man dance in Fieldtown style commemorating the return of trams to the streets of Croydon. The highlight of the dancing was the now-traditional sandwich of Thaxted (the outgoing Squire's side) & Shakespeare (the in-

coming Squire's side) between jigs by the individuals involved & the handover of the Squire's Staff. The proceedings ended with our hosts dancing "The Lass of Richmond Hill" in Fieldtown style, followed by a massed "Bonny Green".

Chalice are to be congratulated on their organisation of the weekend. Particular mention must be made of Mel Melmoth, who filled the role of Meeting Bagman superbly. In addition, the Cross family should be applauded for providing the subject for hoisting (well done, Emma): it was also nice to catch up a bit with Bob.

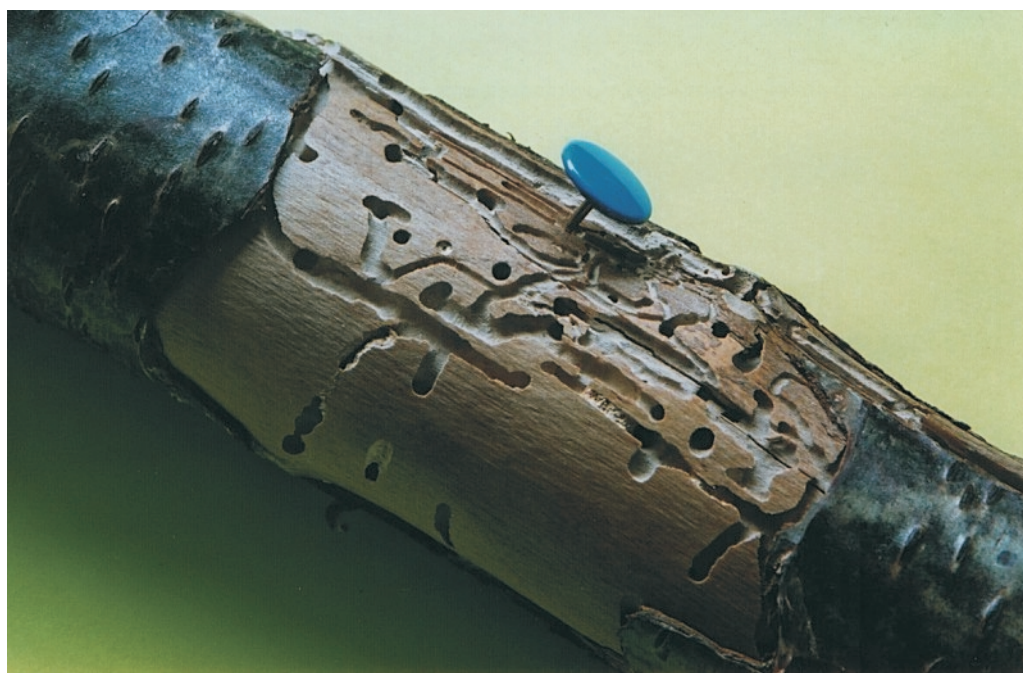
The new Squire's request for submissions for Morris Domesday 2000 has, so far, flown like a lead balloon, with exactly one received (well done, Stafford!). Please email me (editor@themorrisdancer.org.uk) your side's current census details & group picture. Most document formats are acceptable, & photos can be sent as jpegs. With enough returns, another page will be opened (www.hemorrisdancer.org.uk) so that the results are accessible there as well as (eventually) in hard print.

The Morris Dancer is coming together nicely, & I shall be typesetting it almost as soon as this Circular leaves me. Christmas came early in that FLS Books sent me a copy of the new edition of "The Jack-in-the-Green" by Roy Judge, which will be reviewed in MD3 No 8. My pleasure in reading Roy's work is tempered by the fact that he is now being cared for by a MacMillan Nurse. Another important figure of my generation is also not as well as he might be: Bob Grant of Headington Quarry has endured a year of ill-health, although my latest information is slightly more optimistic.

If current scheduling holds, the next Circular (No 37) will be with you in early March next year. I would appreciate it greatly if you could let me have any copy for publication by February 5th, please. Enjoy Boxing Day, & let me have your accounts of your dancing.

Morris on!

**Eddie Dunmore.**



Here is another photograph that was pressed into my hands. This time the subject is a stick, as used by Stafford Morris, showing signs of being a home to something with a taste for wood. Photo: Stafford MM